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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

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SUBJECT: "MAKE GOOD USE OF CANTALOUPE IN SEASON" ★ Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

How's the sugar situation at your house these days? Running a little short for some things, such as desserts? Well, if you are, here's some news about a perfect summer dessert - a fruit that needs no sugar. Yes, it's news about melons - cantaloupe, to be exact. You see, they grow their own sugar and so have a wonderfully sweet flavor all on their own.

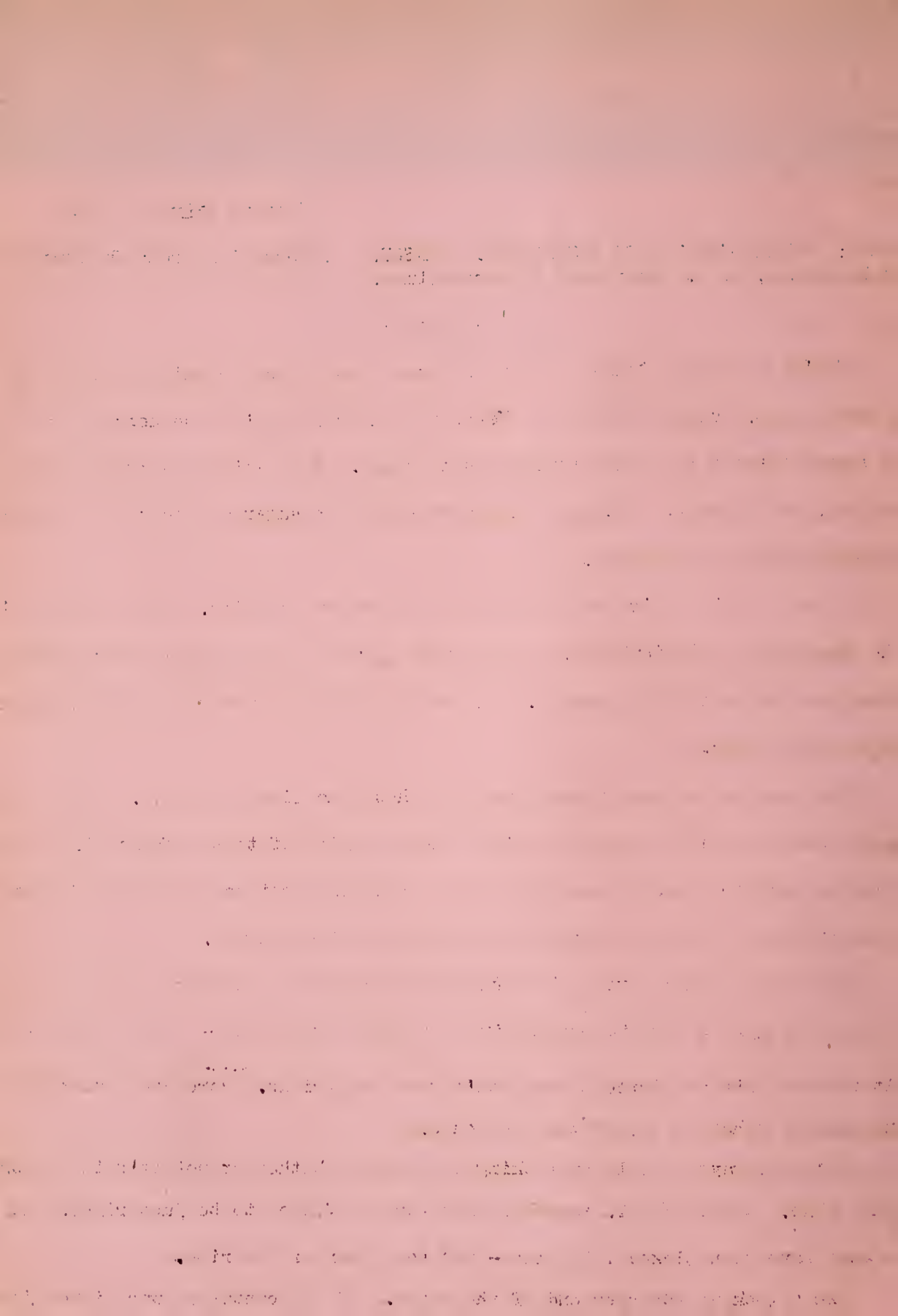
First of all, let's look at the market news on supplies. Melon experts in the U. S. Department of Agriculture, say we probably won't see quite as many cantaloups as usual on the market this season. The reason is that fewer acres were planted to cantaloupe this year.

But this is no cause for alarm among those who like cantaloupe. These same experts assure us that there'll be times when supplies of these melons will be heavier on the market - that's when large crops from different melon-growing States come in. So it's just a case of gathering cantaloups while you may.

One of the things you need to know about cantaloups is how to pick out a good one when you buy. I know it sounds like a simple thing to do -- just buying a melon, but it really isn't so simple if you don't know the tricks. Here are some tips from melon experts on how to select the good ones.

There are ways to tell by looking at a melon whether or not it's in top shape for the table. First of all, remember that for the flavor to be just right, the melon must have been picked full ripe - not too green or too ripe.

Take a look at the stem end of the melon. If the cantaloupe was picked just ripe enough, it will have a clean scar where the stem used to be. If it was picked too green, it'll have part of the stem still attached or else a rough, deep scar



where it was pulled out. Sometimes you'll find little drops of red-brown sugar around the stem scar. When you do, you can be fairly sure the melon is sweet.

Now look at the rest of the cantaloup. If it's good, it will be firm and well-netted. You know what the netting is - that cobweb like design which covers the melon. The blossom end of the melon, which is opposite the stem end, will be firm and show no paleness. And you'll see a slight golden color showing through the netting of the melon too.

And here's another tip. Notice the odor of the melon. It's pretty hard to ignore the odor of a melon anyway. When the melon is ripe the odor is even more noticeable and has a certain sweetness to it that the melon expert can spot in a second.

Another thing about buying cantaloups. Be sure not to get those that are bruised, or flabby, or shriveled, or have decayed spots. You can find decay in a melon by soft, sunken places, and by mold or moisture on the stem end.

It's easy to find good cantaloups on the market - at least, much easier than it was a few years ago. There has been a lot of improvement in producing and handling cantaloups, and today they can be picked full ripe, shipped, and placed on near or distant markets in top condition for the table. You'll find that those from the West usually have salmon-colored flesh, while melons from the South include cantaloups with white meat as well as salmon and pink meat types.

No one can deny that the cantaloup is a good-looking melon. That's one reason why it makes a popular dessert. Aside from being good to look at and good to taste, the cantaloup contains vitamin C and iron, and smaller amounts of some other vitamins and minerals.

There's a lot to say for the looks of the cantaloup, however. It's a handsome melon, attractive in color and shape, and actually needs no decoration to look



well. But if you're one of those people who like to dress up your foods, you'll find the cantaloup an easy subject.

When you serve cantaloups in halves, the center hole is just right for berries or diced fruit. Or, if you wish, add a spoonfull of ice cream and make it cantaloup a la mode. If you serve larger ones by the quarter or slice, you can make a colorful picture by laying some fruit in the center or at one side of the melon. Cherries, red or black raspberries, and blackberries offer good colors to blend with the pink of cantaloup meat.

It's best to chill your cantaloup before serving it. Put it in your refrigerator or other cold storage place until time to serve. Then cut it as you want it. Serve small half cantaloups on "beds" of ice, if you like, but don't put ice in the melon center - the water from melting ice dilutes the flavor.

(Written by Jean Butler)

